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# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

**Thirty-first session**

**Summary record of the 655th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson*: Ms. Ferrer Gómez (Vice-Chairperson)

## Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

*Combined initial, second and third periodic reports and combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Angola*

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*In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Ferrer Gómez, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention** (*continued*)

*Combined initial, second and third periodic reports and combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Angola* (CEDAW/C/AGO/1-3 and 4-5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Angola took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Delgado** (Angola) reviewed the recent history of her country since independence in 1975 and the subsequent civil war, which had left it with a huge internally displaced population, extreme poverty and one of the lowest human development indexes in the world.

3. Introducing Angola's combined initial, second and third periodic reports (CEDAW/C/AGO/1-3) and its combined fourth and fifth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/AGO/4-5), she said that, despite the constraints that had prevented their submission on time, the Government attached importance to the provisions of the Convention, which it had ratified without reservations. One of its priorities was to promulgate anti-discrimination laws, in conformity with article 18 of the Constitution, which stipulated the principles of equality and non-discrimination and the establishment of national machinery to that end.

4. The Ministry of Family Planning and Promotion of Women was the institution responsible for carrying out the national women's rights policies. It worked closely with non-governmental organizations and women's associations, and had focal points in almost all ministries and enterprises, the aim being to achieve gender mainstreaming in all government policies and programmes. The Ministry sought, for instance, to eliminate gender-based poverty by offering counselling and legal aid to women, and to eradicate poverty by means of microcredit programmes and other projects targeting rural women.

5. In its legislation, the Government, addressing social, economic, legal and political aspects of gender parity and discrimination, had sought to protect the special interests and rights of women, especially in the Family Code, the Labour Code, HIV/AIDS legislation, the nationality laws and laws prohibiting all forms of exploitation, including trafficking, prostitution and violence. Angolan legislation was non-discriminatory in both letter and spirit. In practice, however, the laws were not very effectively applied.

6. Since progressive social and economic development had a direct bearing on the status of women, it was crucial to raise the population's living standards. In health and education, infrastructural rehabilitation and training were the priorities. There was a national plan for education for all by the year 2015 that addressed the specific needs of women and children in both formal and non-formal education. There was also a comprehensive reproductive health programme to reduce the high rates of maternal and infant mortality, and programmes to deal with malnutrition, limited access to water and ignorance of proper sanitation.

7. Despite the non-discriminatory Labour Law, some private enterprises did discriminate against women. The public administration itself employed 60 per cent men as against 40 per cent women. Unemployment was higher among women, and they were thus the majority in the informal sector, where some of them were entrepreneurs. The participation of women in decision-making was advancing very slowly. In the current Government, women represented less than 10 per cent of officials at the ministerial and vice-ministerial level, only about 7 per cent in Parliament, and about 10 per cent in the diplomatic service. Since the advent of peace two years earlier, the Government had been preparing and adopting various strategies for the equality and advancement of women, poverty reduction, rural development, education for all, reproductive health, social reintegration and family tracing and reunification.

8. **Ms. Gaspard** hailed the submission of the reports and the beginning of a dialogue as a sign of the Government's strong commitment to implementing the Convention in very difficult circumstances. Some of the articles of the Convention, however, had not been covered, or not completely, or had not been correctly understood. The main problem seemed to be de jure as against de facto rights. Women had paid very heavily during the civil war, but there could be no national reconstruction without women.

*Article 2*

9. **Mr. Flinterman**, referring to article 2 (c) regarding equality under the law and to the Government's clear intention of upholding the rule of law, asked whether judges were aware of the provisions of the Convention and could apply them directly, whether specific training in the Convention was offered to judges and lawyers, what obstacles the people faced in obtaining access to the courts, what measures were being taken to help women in rural areas in particular, and how the Government was helping them. He would like to know more about the legal reforms under way, especially the revisions of the Constitution: if the relationship between domestic and international law would be defined, if women's rights would be included in the new bill of rights, and if a constitutional court would be established.

10. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Convention had been incorporated into domestic law, whether it prevailed over domestic laws and whether it had ever been invoked directly in the courts. The delegation should provide details of how the Government was planning to include gender issues in its Constitution and legislation. On the issue of violence against women, she would like information and statistics on any programmes for women who had been victims of rape and abduction during the war and for their children, and on any prosecutions in that regard. No information had been given on female genital mutilation, and the delegation should give the Committee an idea of the Government's position and also some statistics in that regard.

11. **Ms. Saiga** asked if the provincial Legal Advice Centres (combined initial, second and third reports, p. 17) were public or non-governmental bodies, what powers they had and how they operated in relation to the courts. The reports acknowledged that human rights were often violated in practice, but it was not clear if there was an agency to monitor human rights violations in situations where legal protection was not available. The combined initial, second and third reports (p. 13) spoke of practical steps that needed to be taken to achieve equality between the sexes. She wondered whether those steps had been taken and what the future plans were.

12. As the economy and society modernized, different needs would emerge, prompting shifts in traditional roles and responsibilities, in value systems and in family patterns and migration. It was time to dispel the old idea of women's vulnerability and recognize that experience had shown women to be as capable as men and that their rights must be upheld. The President of the Republic had expressly committed the Government to promoting the advancement of women and creating conditions for family well-being through policies and programmes that would establish de facto equality of rights, an end to discrimination and full gender integration.

13. Women, as the main victims of centuries of colonialism and decades of war, needed particular attention if they were to benefit from equal opportunities in education, training and employment. Women had to be given priority in the Government's social policy, in view of the paramount role of the family in the upbringing of new generations and in the process of pacification and national reconciliation. Accordingly, the President had pledged the adoption of legislation against domestic violence, in accordance with the Convention.

14. **The Chairperson** invited members of the Committee to make general comments on the report or ask questions relating to specific articles of the Convention.

15. **Mr. Melander** said that, since the implementation of legislation was a problem in Angola, the rule of law and the administration of justice had to be strengthened. He asked when the National Strategy and Strategic Framework for the Promotion of Gender Equality, referred to in the foreword to the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports, was expected to be adopted and whether, in the meantime, the delegation was satisfied with action taken for the advancement of women, and if more could be done by the international community to help. Also, he wondered if any reconciliation commission had been set up to deal with the inevitable aftermath of the serious human rights violations that had occurred during the civil war, and if perpetrators of such violations had been granted immunity. Lastly, it was not clear if the Convention was directly applicable in Angola or if it needed to be incorporated first into domestic law.

16. **Ms. Gabr** observed that the integration of women and the full observance of their rights was a slow process that required long-term planning. She would like more information on the Government's approach

to the serious problem of internally displaced persons, and on any laws and strategies that it intended to adopt to transform cultural outlooks that militated against women, and asked how it envisaged the role of civil society in that regard. Had, for example, non-governmental organizations been involved in the preparation of the reports?

17. **Ms. Morvai** said that Angola must, as a matter of basic justice, demand help from the international community in facing the enormous challenge of rebuilding the country and the people's lives and hopes. She would like specific details on the international financial and technical assistance which Angola had been receiving, and asked whether the programmes and projects matched the needs, and if the use of foreign aid had been transparent and well monitored. It would be interesting also to have more information on how the Strategic Framework for the Promotion of Gender Equality was being put into practice and whether non-governmental organizations were involved in the work and in monitoring the process. Lastly, she wondered how the Government, having now taken the important step of submitting periodic reports, would publicize and make use of the Committee's concluding comments.

*Article 3*

18. **Ms. Saiga** said that she would appreciate more information about the legal advice centres referred to in the combined initial, second and third periodic reports. In particular, the Committee wished to know whether the centres were run by the Government or by non-governmental organizations, the nature of their mandate, and their relationship with the courts. Noting also that the reports referred to the consistent violation of human rights in Angola, she asked how the Government planned to address the problem.

19. **Ms. Shin** requested more information concerning the impact of the first Plan of Action adopted by Angola following the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1999. Furthermore, she noted that although the second Plan of Action had been approved at the end of 2001, it had not been put into effect until 2003. She wondered whether the one-year interval indicated a lack of commitment to the advancement of women. Lastly, the Committee wished to know whether non-governmental organizations had been consulted during the drafting of the two action plans.

20. **Ms. Tavares da Silva** said that she wished to stress the positive aspects of the legislative reforms introduced by Angola, as well as the progressive tone of those reforms. However, she had noted a large discrepancy between the formal recognition of women's rights and women's ability to enjoy those rights in practice. The reports sometimes reflected a lack of clarity concerning the strategies needed to bridge that gap. The combined fourth and fifth periodic reports were clearer than the earlier ones, which sometimes simply stated the State party's inability to meet the challenges facing it. The introductory statement by Angola's President in the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports was impressive, reflecting a strong political commitment and recognizing the need to achieve de facto equality. Noting the President's intention to introduce new legislation against domestic violence, she wondered whether the legislation would also address violence in all its forms, and when it would be introduced.

21. **Ms. Gaspard** noted that, in its reports, the State party had addressed article 3 of the Convention under the heading of article 4, and wondered whether that reflected a misunderstanding of the nature of article 4. With regard to Angola's national machinery for promoting gender equality, the Committee would appreciate more information about the human and financial resources of the Ministry of Family Affairs and Advancement of Women. Since many women's issues were of a cross-cutting nature, she also wished to know whether the Ministry worked together with officials at other ministries and within local authorities. It would be useful to know how the Government acted to combat early marriages and to raise awareness of family planning. She wondered whether the State party made use of radio, which in many African countries had proven ideal for conducting such information campaigns. Lastly, she wished to know whether the legal advice centres referred to in the combined initial, second and third reports were run by the Government or by non-governmental organizations and, if the latter, whether the Government provided any support.

*Article 4*

22. **Ms. Patten** thanked the delegation for providing additional data in its combined fourth and fifth periodic reports, and welcomed the introductory statement by Angola's President, which demonstrated the Government's political will to promote gender equality.

The delegation had stated that the lack of women in decision-making positions, whether in Government or in international organizations, was a major impediment to women's advancement. The Committee therefore wished to know whether the Government planned to introduce temporary special measures in order to achieve de facto gender equality, and whether Angola's Constitution included provisions for introducing such measures. Finally, she referred the State party to the Committee's general recommendation No. 25, which clarified the meaning of article 4 of the Convention.

*Article 5*

23. **Ms. Achmad** noted that the State party had outlined in its reports the efforts being made to eliminate violence against women. She wondered whether the legislation being drafted in that area would take into account the Committee's general recommendation No. 19, and whether the Government had drafted a timetable for its introduction. The delegation should indicate whether Angola planned to introduce a general law on violence against women, and whether the gender-sensitization training provided to the police was also provided to prosecutors, judges and the media. A gender-sensitive media sector could be effective in raising the awareness of society at large and, more especially, of women themselves, of the fact that violence against women should be reported as a violation of human rights.

24. The Committee wished to know whether the legal advice centres exerted pressure on Government, or supported the Government, in its plans to introduce a law on violence against women, and whether the centres continued to encourage women victims to complain and seek redress. It would also like more information about institutional mechanisms for monitoring violence against women and about the impact of policies and measures introduced regarding women victims and perpetrators, in terms of changes of attitudes, community response and the quality of the judicial response.

25. **Ms. Kwaku** enquired whether the Government's planned law on domestic violence would cover all forms of violence, and how soon it might come into effect. She also wondered whether the family counselling centre referred to in the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports addressed the needs of women victims of domestic violence, and whether the Government planned to establish more such centres.

26. **Ms. Morvai** said that the problem of girls' early introduction to sexual life should be targeted by the Government and wondered whether the entire problem should not be viewed within the context of abuse and violence and targeted as such. She enquired whether the Government would be prepared to take that step and, if so, whether it would be prepared to prosecute offenders in that regard. The Committee would also appreciate more information about how the problem manifested itself in practice.

27. **Ms. Gnacadja** noted that the combined initial, second and third reports had stated that a number of practical measures would be taken to ensure that gender equality was respected. They had also referred to the abuse of women victims by police, a lack of awareness of violence against women, preferential treatment of men in the courts, and inaction by the police force. The reports also said that there was no culture of gender equality within the Government, and that agencies responsible for protecting women's basic rights did not fulfil that task. She had hoped that the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports would provide some assessment of progress made in those areas, but that was unfortunately not the case. The State party should therefore provide the Committee with such an assessment, and information about the activities of the family counselling centre and the legal advice centres.

*Article 6*

28. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** said that not much had been done to suppress trafficking in women, even though Angola had signed the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Trafficking involved not just children, but also women and girls, and prostitution. The Committee wished to know how the Government planned to deal with that situation. She also noted that the State party had referred to organizations providing support to sex workers, and wished to know more in that regard.

29. **Ms. Khan** asked whether a war crimes commission had been set up to investigate violence against women during Angola's armed conflict and to punish the perpetrators. She wished to know whether steps had been taken to care for children born as a result of rape and to support families who had lost their sole male family member, and whether any temporary special measures would be introduced. It would also be useful to have more information concerning the status

of refugee women in neighbouring countries and concerning steps taken to reintegrate them.

*Article 7*

30. **Ms. Tavares da Silva**, referring to the combined initial, second and third periodic reports, asked why there had been a decline in the number of women in political and economic decision-making positions. According to the report women did not participate in decision-making about peace, disarmament and reconciliation issues. She wished to know the reason for the decline in women's participation, especially at the local level, and whether the Government was actively trying to reverse that trend.

31. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** suggested that a greater portion of the profits from Angola's oil industry should be devoted to programmes for the advancement of women; in light of their central role in family life, the entire nation would benefit.

32. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether the Government had taken temporary special measures in order to fulfil its commitment to increasing the number of women in political office and whether it was working to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

33. **Mr. Flinterman** pointed out that the table on the representation and participation of women in justice services on page 24 of the combined fourth and fifth reports (CEDAW/C/AGO/4-5) did not include statistics on the number of women judges in the provincial courts. The fact that women accounted for about half the nation's law students suggested that the problem would eventually be solved, but temporary special measures should also be adopted. In paragraph 24 of its general recommendation No. 25, the Committee had stated that States parties were obliged to adopt and implement such measures where necessary.

34. **Ms. Gaspard** said that the low percentage of women in decision-making posts, and especially in elected office, was due not to a lack of interest, but to the heavy burden placed on them in all countries. That situation was aggravated in Angola by the large number of single-parent households headed by women. Strong political will was needed; if political parties would not set quotas for the number of women candidates or the number of women elected to office, such quotas should be imposed by law. That approach had proved successful in other African countries, including Morocco, Uganda and Rwanda. She wondered what measures the Government planned to take in that regard and whether the delegation believed that the elections to be held in 2004 would significantly improve the situation. The ultimate goal should be absolute equality in the number of men and women office-holders.

*Article 9*

35. **Mr. Flinterman** requested clarification of the statement on page 27 of the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports that articles 55 ff. of the Civil Code were considered revoked as discriminatory in the context of children's nationality. It would be useful to know what the provisions of those articles were, who had revoked them and whether the nationality legislation (Law No. 13/91), which was still in force, was being applied.

*Article 10*

36. **Ms. Manalo** said that she welcomed the delegation's mention of the national plan, "Education for All to the Year 2015"; it was her understanding that a plan focusing on the girl child for the period 2000-2005 had also been adopted. She wondered which agency had the primary responsibility for implementing those plans, whether adequate funding was available and from what sources, and what role the Ministry of Education played in the implementation process. It would also be useful to know what incentives, such as scholarships and free lunches and uniforms, were available for women and girl students and whether teacher training programmes were in place since most primary schoolteachers did not have even a high school education. Lastly, she asked whether the liberalization of the educational system had had positive results and what percentage of women and girls were enrolled in private schools.

37. **Ms. Achmad** pointed out that gender stereotypes often led parents and teachers to discourage girls from enrolling in non-traditional subjects, especially in rural areas. She wondered whether the study on gender mentioned on page 28 of the combined initial, second and third periodic reports had examined that issue and suggested that a systematic monitoring system should be introduced since girls who chose traditional areas of study were likely to be limited to jobs in the informal sector.

38. The combined fourth and fifth periodic reports mentioned the establishment of a National Gender Programme in the Context of the Educational System, 2001-2005 and of a National Gender Commission and the preparation of a national indicative programme on education for girls in 1999/2000, which had among its objectives the prevention of gender stereotypes in classrooms. She wondered how that objective was being pursued; possibilities included teacher training, textbook reform and the introduction of a common curriculum for boys and girls. She also asked whether and to what extent the high illiteracy rate among women had been reduced.

39. **Ms. Saiga** asked how many years of primary education were currently compulsory and whether they were offered free of charge. The Government's political commitment to education, however laudable, did not appear to have been adequately reflected at the level of policy-making. It was not clear what the real goals of the educational reform were and what was being done to encourage children to remain in school.

*Article 11*

40. **Ms. Gabr** said that Angola's great wealth in natural resources made the enaction of equitable labour legislation especially important. Angolan law appeared to provide for equality of opportunity in the public sector, but most countries were moving towards free market economies and the private sector could absorb many women workers. The delegation should explain whether there was any discrimination in the jobs open to women. It was also important to ensure social protection for working wives and mothers, including day nurseries and other benefits, to eliminate sexual abuse in the workplace and to facilitate the granting of credit to women.

41. **Ms. Patten** said that she welcomed the introduction of maternity benefits for working women as from 2000 and asked whether awareness campaigns had been conducted to make urban and rural women aware of those benefits. Since women had little bargaining power and might be afraid that they would lose their jobs if they reported violations of the law, a labour inspectorate should be established to monitor compliance, including in the areas of health and safety and especially in the private sector; industrial tribunals and free legal aid for women were also necessary.

42. The Committee had received reports of gross pay inequalities; she wondered what system had been established to monitor that problem and which International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions Angola had ratified. Further information would also be appreciated on any legislation to address the problem of child labour and that of sexual harassment in the workplace.

43. **Ms. Khan** noted that girls as young as 10 were included in the employment statistics and wondered what kinds of work they did. She also asked what employment opportunities there were for women in the public sector. The combined initial, second and third reports stated that women accounted for 51 per cent of all government employees but that 44 per cent of women age 19 or older had had no schooling. Those two statistics would appear to be incompatible. Lastly, she wondered whether the available microcredit facilities required collateral, in which case most women would be unable to borrow through them.

*Article 12*

44. **Ms. Saiga** pointed out that the five-year plan for maternal and child health care and the two-year programme in the health-care field, mentioned in the combined initial, second and third periodic reports, would by now have ended and wondered whether new ones were being implemented. It would be useful to have assessment statistics on the plan, the programme and the other health measures mentioned on page 33 of that document.

45. **Ms. Khan** stated that, of all the areas of life in Angola where the situation was critical in the aftermath of war, none was as critical as health: the life expectancy for women was actually falling, having been 45 years but now down to around 44, the rates of both maternal and child mortality were very high, and the fertility rate of 6.9 was one of the highest in the world. She wondered whether the country had a national health policy which encompassed all these issues as well as others like the destruction of the health infrastructure, the lack of safe drinking water and the need for sewerage systems, which were all mentioned in the report. She was interested in the health budget, how much it was and what its priorities were, and also what kind of policy the country had on HIV/AIDS; there was a law on HIV/AIDS, but no mention in the report of its contents. She enquired whether Angola had a national policy to control the

spread of AIDS as well as to provide adequate treatment to AIDS victims.

46. **Ms. Patten** agreed that, in view of the dramatic health situation of women in Angola, health must become a higher priority on the Government's agenda. The section on Infrastructures in the combined fourth and fifth reports (p. 39) stated that government policy was still oriented towards centralized maternity services in the main towns, with the rural areas left without coverage as they were considered politically and militarily unstable. She wondered whether those areas were still considered unsafe, and whether the new infrastructure rehabilitation initiatives mentioned in the report had focused on providing heal infrastructure at the local level. The 1997 study carried out at the Luanda Maternity Hospital had revealed disturbing figures: 44 per cent of women hospitalized subsequent to an unsafe abortion were between 15 and 19 years of age, and 95 per cent had started sexual activity before the age of 20. It would be useful to have further information on efforts by the Government to provide family planning information to women and girls, especially in the rural areas.

47. The lack of comprehensive measures to combat the high rate of HIV/AIDS was also of concern, with testing and counselling services available only in two cities. A UNDP study had shown women to be largely unaware of the forms of sexual contamination of the disease, and there was no national inquiry into its prevalence in the country. She wished to know whether the Government would provide preventive measures as a priority, including education to raise awareness, and what the current budget allocated to that effort was, what medical assistance was available and accessible to women and girls with HIV/AIDS, and whether a study was envisaged to assess discrimination against those who were infected.

*Article 13*

48. **Mr. Flinterman** drew attention to article 13 (c) of the Convention, the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life, and stressed how important they were for both men and women. There seemed to be no participation by women in sporting activities, however, since the Government was eager to raise the profile of Angolan culture in the eyes of the world, Angolan women could become a vector to transmit it. He understood that before 2000 it had been difficult for Angola to implement article 13 of the Convention, but was disappointed to find that the combined fourth and fifth reports gave no information at all about sport or culture. The reporting State should provide information on the current situation in that regard and on what programmes the Government had adopted or would adopt, considering that sport could act as a bridge between cultures and was conducive to reconciliation and reunification.

*Article 14*

49. **Ms. Shin** pointed out the contradiction in the situation of women highlighted in the combined initial, second and third reports (p. 18), which stated that formal law applied only in urban areas, while in rural areas traditional laws, discriminating against women, prevailed. It was important to understand the multiple roles of rural women, listed in the report, which also referred to the need to improve the status of rural women as an integral part of rural development. Microcredit, too, was mentioned, and the support offered to women after the Stockholm Summit, with Government and NGOs aiming to redistribute resources to benefit women. The reports, however, did not indicate whether that initiative had been a success. The problems faced by women included an increase in HIV/AIDS, the prevalence of polygamy, and the fact that the heads of many households were women. Although some account was given concerning action by NGOs, she would like to know what the Government itself was doing about the serious problems faced by women in rural Angola.

*Article 16*

50. **Ms. Belmihoub-Zerdani** asked for further information on the two kinds of marriage in Angola, on how marriages were dissolved, and on marriage contracts, inheritance, the separation of property, and the custody of children. The Beijing Conference had been an important opportunity to advance the CEDAW Convention, especially in Africa, but there was still much work to be done to implement its Declaration and Programme for Action, requiring both political will and human and financial resources. It was imperative to find ways to improve women's purchasing power and implement further action programmes aimed at establishing equality between men and women. More resources were needed at the national level, which would be the responsibility of the Government,

working together with NGOs. At the regional level, ways needed to be found to finance projects so that through the African Union the continent could demonstrate the same kinds of solidarity as was to be seen in the European Union.

51. The United Nations Regional Commissions should be encouraged to find funds with which to develop the Angolan programme of action. International financial resources had to be mobilized for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action, and for the Beijing + 5 monitoring and follow-up. The rich countries had committed themselves at Beijing to make available 0.7 per cent of GDP for development, and she enquired whether Angola had received bilateral or multilateral assistance within that parameter of 0.7 per cent. It was important for the Government of Angola to demand its rights in that respect.

52. **Ms. Gnacadja** requested more information on the law applicable to marriage, the provisions of the Civil Code and the Family Code, and the meaning of some of the terms in articles 400 and 392 of the Civil Code, like "bride-price of the defendant" and "married effects". What distinction did the law make between adultery by a husband and adultery by a wife, under articles 401 and 404 of the Civil Code. The Family Code provided that a minor could marry, a boy at 16 and a girl at 15, if careful consideration of circumstances showed marriage to be the best way to protect the interests of the minor. She would like to know to what other circumstances, apart from early pregnancy, that might apply. That provision could be considered as an illegal recognition of early marriages, which would run counter to all the Government's efforts to improve the education of girls, and must therefore be dealt with urgently. It would also be useful to have further information on widows' right to inherit, especially whether the draft Law on Lands under discussion covered women's right to inherit land, an aspect of inheritance law which was crucial for widows. Finally, she enquired what legal provisions there were for women with children abandoned by the father, in a country where most households were headed by women.

53. **Ms. Manalo** noted that the reports referred to polygamy as practised in Angola, and wondered whether it was sanctioned by law and what specific steps were being taken by the Government to eliminate it.

54. **Ms. Shin**, referring to the Family Code, which guaranteed the same rights for husbands and wives in various spheres, asked how those rights were guaranteed by the State, especially for women. Did women know their rights; if those rights were violated by the husband, for instance by taking another wife in spite of the principle of monogamy under Angolan law or by abusing the wife, could the wife take the case to court?

55. The report gave no information on the reality of women's situation, and she wished to know whether the Government had carried out any surveys of the position of women in marriage and family life, perhaps in coordination with the National Institute of Statistics, to provide gender-disaggregated data on family life and other important areas where discrimination against women might arise. She noted that, while the legal age for marriage was 18, marriage for minors could be authorized, the criterion being the physical development of the child concerned. The reporting State explained who decided whether the boy or the girl was physically developed, and why boys could be married at 16, and girls at 15, instead of the same age for both. She felt that the age ought to be raised to 18, because there were implications for both health and education if marriage was allowed earlier. Lastly, how were children living unregistered in a family which was not their own protected from abuse?

56. **Ms. Gaspard** asked what recourse women had when widowed in a polygamous marriage, and what legal provisions governed inheritance in such a situation. In a polygamous marriage a wife could be repudiated or dismissed. She wond red what the implications were for a woman who had been dismissed but not divorced.

57. **Ms. Achmad** referred to the agricultural development programme prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 1996 but never implemented because of the 1998 military instability. The underlying policy left out the gender issue as something which could be dealt with at the family level (CEDAW/C/AGO/4-5, p. 45). In that regard, she stressed that the gender issue was a cross-cutting issue and could not be ignored in any sphere, especially not in rural development.

58. **Ms. Schöpp-Schilling** said that, during the morning session, all had applauded the legal and institutional efforts of the Government of Angola within the framework of articles 2 and 4.1 of the

Convention, but that the implementation of the texts in question remained unclear, as did the extent to which formal legal structures were in contradiction with traditional laws. Which of the two in fact governed women's lives, and did it depend on where in the country they lived? As had already been pointed out, a survey of actual practices was needed, which should show exactly who administered justice in the rural areas. There was mention in the reports of Municipal Courts, but not of any rural equivalents. She wondered whether that meant that in the villages, justice was administered by tribal elders, and whether there were any women among them. Now that the country was at peace, were there any plans to train rural judges in formal law or any efforts to codify rural and traditional law as had been done in other African countries?

59. Referring to polygamy, she wondered whether in a country ravaged by post-war poverty women might opt voluntarily for polygamy as affording them better protection and support. The delegation had quoted Angola's Constitution, and she would appreciate being given the exact text in question. The current equality clause allowed no privileges on grounds of sex, which would appear to preclude any temporary special measures, but perhaps Angola had found a way to minimize that problem, and, in any case, the matter should be discussed in the context of Angola's review of its Constitution.

60. **Ms. Coker-Appiah** stressed the importance of the work of birth attendants, in view of the high maternal and infant mortality figures. Coverage for pre-natal care was only 35 per cent, and for mothers giving birth in institutions only 18 per cent, so most women gave birth at home without trained assistance. A 1997 programme to train midwives to assist with births had trained more than 1,300 people by June 1999, but war, compounded by internal migration, had aggravated the situation and disrupted follow-up to the programme. She enquired what the current situation was as far as traditional midwives were concerned, and whether training was continuing. The reports indicated that retroviral treatment for pregnant women with AIDS had been approved by the Council of Ministers but had not yet been put into effect. She asked when and in which parts of the country the treatment would be provided. Lastly, the reporting State should explain whether girls and boys had equal rights to inherit their parents' property.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*